N-*be-that*-constructions in everyday German conversation: A reanalysis of "die Sache ist" (*'the thing is'*) -clauses as projector phrases[1]

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1. Introduction

In the search for a praxis-based theory of grammar, for modelling a grammar of spoken language, work within Interactional Linguistics has increasingly turned toward usage-based variants of 'Construction Grammar' (Ono/Thompson 1995; Thompson 2002a; Hopper 2004; Auer 2005a, 2006; Couper-Kuhlen/Thompson 2006; Günthner 2007a,b, i. pr.; Günthner/Imo 2006; Imo 2006a,b; Deppermann i.Dr.). Its non-modular, holistic perspective on language, its interrelation of form and function of linguistic units, its inclusion of pragmatic, discourse-functional and cognitive aspects in analysing linguistic constructions, as well as its assumption, that grammatical structures grow out of communicative actions, make Construction Grammar attractive for a praxis-oriented perspective on linguistic phenomena.

However, even though the call for a usage-based perspective has often been emphasized in studies of Construction Grammar, so far, there are very few studies that analyse grammatical constructions in authentic, everyday interactions (Fried/Östman 2005). Even so-called 'usage-based' approaches (Goldberg 1995, 1996; Lambrecht 2001; Croft 2001) neglect questions concerning sequential, dialogical, as well as genre- and activity-related aspects in the use of constructions. Instead, most studies within Construction Grammar are still oriented toward decontextualized examples based on written language, without inquiring into the emergence of constructions in the process of interaction.

This study is a contribution toward an understanding of linguistic structure and function by studying grammar 'at work' (Schegloff 1996). Instead of taking grammatical constructions for granted, I shall inquire into their nature by looking at their interactive emergence in everyday usage.

On the basis of an empirical analysis of "die Sache/das Ding ist,..."-patterns ('the thing is'), I will study form and function of this complex, bipartite construction in spoken German.

The analysis is based on a corpus of 91 everyday interactions (30 to 180 minutes in length), collected during the years 1989-2006 in different parts of Germany. They include informal face-to-face interactions among friends and family members, office hours at university, genetic counselling sessions, radio phone-in programs, as well as data from the TV series 'Big Brother'.

2. Uses of 'N *be that*'-constructions in German

In Construction Grammar, complex sentences such as 'the thing/point/problem is that…' are referred to as "N-*be-that*-constructions" (Schmid 2001).[2] They consist of an initial noun phrase headed by an abstract noun ('thing, point, problem...') functioning as a subject, a form of the copula BE and a THAT-clause syntactically functioning as subject complement:

[abstract noun, copula, that-clause].[3]

Descriptions of 'N-*be-that*'-constructions, however, display various inadequacies:

(i)   they are either based on invented or written data;

(ii)   interactional aspects are ignored;

(iii)   deviations from postulated formats are treated as anacoluthons, performance errors, etc.

In German reference grammars, the pattern at issue is mainly treated as a biclausal construction, consisting of a matrix clause followed by a subject complement clause:

[matrix clause + complement clause]. The matrix clause is not a fully-fledged syntactic 'gestalt', as its verb (the copula) requires a further constituent. This constituent is produced in the following complement clause, introduced by a subjunction such as "dass" (*'that'*). The matrix clause ("die Sache ist") is treated as the main clause; the following complement clause is

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2 Constructions are treated as form-function pairings whose structural and semantic properties cannot (entirely) be accounted for in terms of other properties of the grammar: "Together, the matrix clause and the RC form a constructional unit whose global meaning is not equal to the sum of the meanings of the parts." (Lambrecht 2001: 469)

3 In his corpus-based study of "N-*be-that*-constructions" in written English, Schmid (2001) argues that the ten nouns that were found to occur most frequently in this construction are "problem, thing, truth, fact, trouble, point, result, view, reason, idea". Besides the fact that his observations are based on English and, thus, are not automatically transferable to German, all his examples stem from written data. Thus, various forms and functions predominant for spoken language are not taken into account.

considered as subordinate – indicated by the subjunction "dass" as well as by verb-final constituent order (a grammatical feature of subordinate clauses in German).

In general, complement clauses are considered to be

> "[...] prototypical instances of subordination; […] A subordinate clause is then describable as one whose profile is overridden by that of a main clause. […] In a typical complement clause construction, the two clauses combine directly and the main clause is clearly the profile determinant: 'I know she left' designates the process of knowing, not of leaving." (Langacker 1991: 436)

In this presentation, however, I argue that categories such as 'matrix clause' and 'complement clause' are problematic when it comes to "N *be that*"-constructions in spoken German: neither can the 'N-*be*'-part ("die Sache/das Ding ist") be treated as a matrix clause holding the relevant information for the following discourse, nor is the following syntagma (i.e. the complement clause) formally and conceptually subordinate to the preceding clause.

In looking at ways in which interactants use this construction in spoken language, we realize that the instantiation of the 'complement clause' dissolves into various construction formats. Some of these can no longer be treated as subordinate. Instead, we observe a downgrading of the 'matrix clause' on behalf of the syntagma that follows; it tends to be reanalysed as a 'projector construction' (Hopper 2005, 2006), building up a projecting space, and contextualizing 'more to come'.

In the following, I shall introduce the various formats the 'complement clause' in "die Sache ist"-constructions can take and will show how a grammatical construction changes its nature when it is examined from the perspective of everyday usage in spoken interaction.

2.1. 'N-*be-that*'-utterances followed by a subordinate clause introduced with the subjunctor "dass"[4]

Some "die Sache ist/das Ding ist"-constructions in my data reveal the canonical structure described in German reference grammars: they are complex clauses with the first clause consisting of an initial NP ("die Sache" or "das Ding") and the copula "ist" (in present tense); the following clause being introduced by the complementizer "dass" and showing subordinate clause word order (i.e. final positioning of the finite verb).[5]

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4 This study will concentrate on "die Sache/das Ding ist"-patterns, without taking semantically specific nouns, such as "Frage" (*'question'*), "Problem" (*'problem'*), etc. into account. I.e. I will only consider abstract head nouns. Cf. also Aijmer (2007) for uses of the English construction "the fact is that". In contrast to English *"(the) fact is that"*-phrases ("*fact is…*") or German "Tatsache ist" (*'fact is'*), I find no cases of "die Sache ist" or "das Ding ist" with the article ("die" or "das") missing.

5 German, which has verb-second as its basic word order in simple and main clauses, requires final position of the finite verb in subordinate clauses. Thus, complement clauses introduced by the subjunction "dass" (that) – according to German grammar – display verb-final order. German thus provides a clear signal for the grammatical incorporation of one clause into another.

The following transcript stems from a talk during a university office hour. Elke, a lecturer, has just proposed to her student Birte that – instead of starting to work on a new topic – she would be better served to write her dissertation about the same topic she explored in her Master's thesis. (Up to this interaction Elke has assumed that Birte plans to get a Ph D in General Linguistics.):

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PROMOTION
1   Elke:  und dann auch vie- vielleicht, (.)
2          lieber DAS thema.
3   Birte: das DING ist aber auch-
4          dass ich in der germanIStik promoVIEren will.
5          (0.5)
6   Elke:  [mhm]
7   Birte: [und] deshalb ein germanIStisches THEma brauch.
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DISSERTATION
1   Elke:  and then also per- perhaps, (.)
2          THIS topic would be better.
3   Birte: but the THING is also-
4          that I want to get my PH D in german.
5          (0.5)
6   Elke:  [mhm]
7   Birte: [and] that's why I need a topic within germanistics.
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In response to Elke's proposal (lines 1-2), Birte produces a rejection, introduced by "das DING ist aber auch-" (*'but the THING is also-')*. Already the opposition marker "aber auch" (*'but also'*) foreshadows an upcoming disagreement. The matrix clause "das DING ist aber auch-" opens a projection space, which delays her main argument: that she wants to write her Ph D thesis in German Studies (and not in General Linguistics) and, thus, needs a new topic. Only with the closing of the second syntagma, is the syntactic 'gestalt' (Auer 2005) complete. Therefore, the construction consists of two parts:

Part A: the matrix clause

Part B: the complement clause

part A	part B
N+copula-clause	*dass*-clause
das DING ist aber auch- *but the THING is also-*	dass ich in der germanIStik promoVIEren will. *that I want to get my PH D in german.*

This bipartite construction reveals a complex syntactic gestalt: The first component (part A) is incomplete as the predicative element is lacking. Thus, the instantiation of part A opens a

projection space which – due to the open argument position – is only closed after the production of the expected constituent, and thus, the identification of the open element.

Even though the two parts are syntactically integrated by means of subordinate verb order in the complement clause, they are realized in two independent prosodic contours. In uttering part A, the speaker delays the focal point (part B) so as to give it more salience and attract the recipient's attention to it.

The next segment is also taken from an office hour at the university. Karl, Anni's lecturer, proposes that during winter term she attend his colloquium:

```
KOLLOQUIUM: ANNI-KARL 2005
1 Anni:    ich komm auf JEden fall zu Ih[nen.]
2 Karl:                              [hm. ]
3          (-)
4 Anni:    das ding wÄre,
5          dass ich im oktOber noch ein prAktikum in ENGland hab,
6          (-) un- erst im noVEMber teilnehmen kann.
7 Karl:    hm (-)
8 Karl:    w- wann genAU sind sie dann wieder [HIER?]
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COLLOQUIUM: ANNI-KARL 2005
1 Anni:    I will definitely come to y[ou.]
2 Karl:                              [hm.]
3          (-)
4 Anni:    the thing would be,
5          that in october I still have a practical training period in
           england,
6          (-) an- I can only take part in november.
7 Karl:    hm (-)
8 Karl:    w- when exactly are you back [here?]
```

The matrix clause "das ding wÄre,"[6] (l. 4) opens a projection span which is only closed when the expected component is being provided. By delaying the kernel of the message, the speaker not only holds the floor but also increases the salience of the information in the second component.

part A	part B
N+copula-clause	*dass*-clause
das ding wÄre,	dass ich im oktOber noch ein prAktikum in ENGland hab, (-) un- erst im noVEMber teilnehmen kann.
the thing would be,	*that in october I still have a practical training period in england, (-) an- I can only take part in november.*

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6 This is the only example in my data, with the copula in the subjunctive: "das ding **wÄre**," (*'the thing would be'*).

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In the examples so far, part B shows typical features of syntactic integration into the matrix clause ("die Sache/das Ding ist"). It contains the subjunction "dass" (*'that'*) as well as verb-final constituent order (i.e. subordinate verb order). However, in spite of their syntactic integration, the two clauses are prosodically independent; i.e. they are realized in two separate prosodic units. As in the preceding example, the matrix clause (part A) is not a self-contained 'turn construction unit' (TCU); it cannot stand on its own, as the predicative element is lacking. It foreshadows what is going to come next, and, thus, enables the recipients to anticipate the following components. Here, it projects a subject clause to follow, and attaches itself to the subsequent syntagma (part B). The opened projection only comes to close once the expected component is provided.

The construction at hand is used for a rhetorical deferral of the focal – often face-threatening – point.[7] Furthermore, the main predication, i.e. the interactively relevant information, is not presented within the matrix clause but in the subordinate complement clause. It is the subordinate clause which provides the 'kernel' of the utterance, and thus, the information which remains relevant in the following turns.

Studies within Conversation Analysis (Schegloff 1980) show that interactants frequently make use of 'pres' ('pre-sequences') in order to open up a conversational space for the focal utterance. Story prefaces, 'pres' to invitations, 'pres' to rejections, etc., they all share the function of foreshadowing an action (by the same speaker). Frequently, these subsidiary activities project something potentially face-threatening. However, in contrast to these pre-sequences analysed within CA, part A in "die Sache ist"-constructions occur in the same turn as the following part (part B), without expecting a recipient reaction in between.[8]

Matrix clauses like "die Sache ist" share some of these features: interactionally, they are no longer "profile determinant" (Langacker 1991: 436), but are subsidiary activities which are used to foreshadow the focal activity;[9] i.e. the profile of the matrix clause is overridden by the following syntagma, as the interactants typically orient to the complement clause rather than the main clause (Thompson 2002b: 131ff.).[10]

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7 Cf. Schmid (2001: 1535) and Miller/Weinert (1998: 243) who treat 'N-*be-that*-constructions' and 'the thing is'-constructions as "focus constructions".

8 Cf. also Pekarek Doehler (presentation at the 10th International Pragmatics Conference in Göteburg, 2007).

9 Cf. also Laury & Okamoto (presentation at the 10th International Pragmatics Conference in Göteburg, 2007) on the complement-taking predicates "tte yuu ka" and "I mean" in Japanese and English. As the authors argue, in spoken discourse these Japanese and English constructions have become set phrases which no longer function as main clauses.

10 Cf. also Keevallik (presentation at the 10th International Pragmatics Conference in Göteburg, 2007) for similar results concerning interrogative complements as independent clauses in Estonian interactions. Cf. also Aijmer (2007) concerning English "the fact is (that)"-constructions.

In both transcripts DISSERTATION as well as COLLOQUIUM, the "die Sache/das Ding ist"-constructions introduce a somewhat face-threatening action: In DISSERTATION, Birte states that she no longer intends to get a Ph D in General Linguistics but in German Studies and thus rejects Elke's advice. In COLLOQUIUM, Anni provides the reason, why she cannot attend the proposed colloquium in time.

Thus, on the basis of conversational data, we can treat the construction at hand, which builds up expectations concerning its continuation and thus, projects a certain kind of gestalt-closure, as a *projector construction* (Hopper 2004, 2006; Günthner 2006, 2007b, i. pr.). As Hopper (2006) points out, 'projector constructions' share the following features:

• they mark a break in an on-going interaction,

• they may – for various reasons – delay the delivery of an important point,

• they may signal an especially strong focus on a point of argument,

• they may hold on the floor and forestall a predicted interruption,

• they may provide a cognitive breathing space for formulating the next utterance in a maximally effective way,

• they may project 'more to come' and thus permit participants to negotiate the future course of an interaction.

In everyday talk, speakers make use of various types of *projector constructions* such as pseudoclefts (Hopper 2001, 2004; Günthner 2006), extrapositions (Couper-Kuhlen/Thompson 2006; Günthner 2007b), matrix-complement-clauses (Imo 2006a,b), formulas of thematization (Altmann 1981; Zifonun et al. 1997), 'Complement-Taking-Predicate Phrases' (Thompson 2002b), 'hanging topics' (Selting 1993; Scheutz 1997; Altmann 1981), "es ist so" (*'it's like that'*)-constructions (Auer 2006), 'disconnected "wenn"…'-constructions (Günthner 1999) etc. These constructions are connected within a taxonomic network of related constructions with structural and functional overlaps (Croft 2001: 25). They all, for various reasons, delay the delivery of a significant segment of talk.

2.2. 'N-*be'* -utterances followed by a main clause

In the data at hand, we frequently encounter 'N-*be*'-constructions with main clauses filling the complement part; i.e. part B is no longer introduced by the subjunction "dass", instead it shows the word order of an independent sentence (i.e. verb-second positioning).

Sven tells his fellow student Tanja about his professor who refuses to give him credit for having attended a seminar:

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PHILOSOPHIE-SCHEIN
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21 Tanja:   dann wÜrd ich auch nich mehr (.)
22          zu dem PROF gehen, (-)
23          und ihn auch nich als PRÜFer NEHmen.
24 Sven:    ne. <<f> MACH ich auch [NICH.>]
25 Tanja:                          [mhm   ]
26 Sven:    die sache is;
27          er will mir nich MAL den ↑SCHEIN anerkennen; (.)
28          weil er sagt,
29          es wäre manipu[lIert.]
30 Tanja:                 [mhm   ]
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CREDIT IN PHILOSOPHY
21 Tanja:   in that case I also wouldn't go anymore (.)
22          to that professor, (-)
23          nor would I pick him as your supervisor.
24 Sven:    no. <<f> I won't do [that.>]
25 Tanja:                       [mhm]
26 Sven:    the thing is;
27          he does not even want to give me ↑CREDIT for the course; (.)
28          cause he says,
29          it would be manipu[lated.]
30 Tanja:                     [mhm]
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The beginning of this bipartite "die Sache ist"-construction corresponds with the canonical form above; however instead of a subordinate complement clause, the matrix clause is followed by a syntactically as well as prosodically independent clause, displaying 'main clause order', with the finite verb ("will") in verb-second position: The syntagma "er will mir nich MAL den ↑SCHEIN anerkennen," ('*he does not even want to give me ↑CREDIT for the course')* (l. 27) – incrementally followed by a causal clause ("weil er sagt, es wäre manipu[lIert.]"; '*cause he says, it would be manipu[lated.]')* – shows no sign of adhering whatsoever to rules of syntactic embedding; i.e. it is not integrated hypotactically into a complex sentence and, thus, has to be treated as topologically non-subordinate.[11] Here, the bipartite construction consists of a juxtaposition of a matrix clause and a main clause:

part A	part B
N+copula-clause	main clause
die sache is; *the thing is;*	er will mir nich MAL den ↑SCHEIN anerkennen; *he does not even want to give me ↑CREDIT for the course;*

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[11] Cf. Matthiessen/Thompson (1988) for a discussion of the squishiness of "subordination".

As in the preceding examples, the matrix clause functions as a projector phrase indicating 'more to come' and, thus, foreshadowing the focal activity. Instead of a syntactic and conceptual dependence of the complement clause on the matrix clause, we are faced with the opposite case: The projecting matrix clause, which cannot stand on its own, now becomes syntactically, semantically, as well as interactionally dependent on the following syntagma, which holds the expected, relevant information, and which is realized as an independent clause showing no sign of subordination.

Thus, the present construction can no longer be assigned to the schema [matrix clause + complement clause], as the 'matrix clause' no longer – neither on the syntactic nor on the interactional level – functions as the "profile determiner" (Langacker 1991: 436).

In the next transcript, stemming again from a university office hour interaction, professor P offers her student S a suggestion, which S rejects:[12]

```
SPRECHSTUNDENTRANSKRIPT Nr. 21 (MEER et al. SPRECHSTUNDEN)
296 P:     also irgendwie so inhaltlich.
297        (...)
298 S:     das wär (auch was.)
299 P:     mhm,
300 S:     mhm, also ehm;
301        die sache is,
302        jetz hab ich also mit calvino angefangen; (-)
303        jetz so vom zeitplan her; ehm (2,0)
304        weiß nich wie lang das dann halt dauern wird,
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OFFICE   HOUR   TRANSCRIPT   No.   21   (MEER   et   al.   OFFICE   HOURS)
296 P:     well somehow from the content.
297        (...)
298 S:     that would be (something.)
299 P:     mhm,
300 S:     mhm, well ehm;
301        the thing is,
302        I've started to read calvino; (-)
303        now concerning the time schedule; ehm (2,0)
304        I am not sure how long it will take,
```

Again, the "die sache is,"-syntagma does not represent a self-contained utterance but syntactically projects a subject clause to follow. The 'complement clause' ("jetz hab ich also mit calvino angefangen; (-)", *I've started to read calvino;(-)'* (l. 302)), which is attached asyndetically, is a full-fledged and complete German sentence, with no formal sign of syntactic dependency (i.e. no subjunction, no final positioning of the verb). This syntactic independence is supported prosodically:

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12 Thanks to Dorothee Meer for providing this example.

part A	part B
N+copula-clause	main clause

`die sache is,`
 	
the thing is,
	`jetz hab ich also mit calvino`
	`angefangen;`
	I've started to read calvino;

From a topological perspective, the matrix clauses in OFFICE HOUR and CREDIT IN PHILOSOPHY occupy the position of the pre-front field in German. (In German there is no fixed order of S and O, as in an SVO language. Instead, the topology of the standard declarative clause is defined by the position of the finite (and non-finite) parts of the verb. Together they form the so-called 'sentence brace'.[13]) The general function of the pre-front field in spoken German is to frame (often metapragmatically) the subsequent utterance (Auer 1996, 1997):

pre-front field	front field	left verbal brace	middle field	right verbal brace	end field
`die sache is;`	`er`	`will`	`mir nich MAL den ↑SCHEIN`	`anerkennen,`	
`die sache is,`	`jetz`	`hab`	`ich also mit calvino`	`angefangen;`	

Semi-fixed phrases positioned in the pre-front field often function as framing devices or metapragmatic cues projecting a continuation (Auer/Günthner 2005). The connection between the "die Sache ist"-phrase – positioned in the pre-front field – and the following syntagma (part B) is rather loose: First, each part has its own prosodic design, second, part B can stand on its own without being ungrammatical. Thus, due to the loss of the elements indicating grammatical incorporation (i.e. no subjunction, no final positioning of the verb) as well as the related consequence that part B is a full-fledged and complete sentence, the grammatical cohesion between the two parts is strongly reduced.

The matrix clause, positioned in the pre-front field, however, is reanalysed as a framing device, projecting the upcoming stretch of discourse.[14] The focal information is positioned in the complement clause.

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13 Cf. Auer (1996) for a detailed syntactic account of the pre-front field in spoken German. Cf. also Auer/Günthner (2005) and Günthner/Imo (2004).

14 Cf. Edmondson (1981: 155), who treats "the point is" and "the thing is" as "underscorers" ; i.e. "message-oriented devices" which "draw special attention to the following, preceding, or ongoing communicative act".

This bi-part division between a framing element (positioned in the pre-front field) (part A) and a following, syntactically somewhat independent clause (part B) shows formal and functional parallels with other elements in spoken German which are regularly positioned in the pre-front field, such as 'topic formulas' (Altmann 1981: 82ff.; Selting 1993; Auer 1997; Scheutz 1997; Schwitalla 1997/2003; Zifonun et al. 1997: 524ff.) and discourse markers (Gohl/Günthner 1999; Günthner 1999; Auer/Günthner 2005). In all these cases, the element positioned in the pre-front field is (generally) prosodically independent, it represents a syntactically non complete, non-turn-constitutive unit, which is only complete with the following syntagma. Such reanalyses of matrix clauses as framing elements (Auer/Günthner 2005; Günthner/Imo 2004; Rehbein 2003), which lead to an interactional (and syntactic) downgrading of the matrix part, are rather frequent in spoken language (Auer 1998). As Thompson/Mulac (1991) and Thompson (2002b) show, complement clauses in spoken English also tend to be reanalysed as epistemic/evaluative/evidential phrases.[15] Thompson (2002b) furthermore argues that what is traditionally considered to be a subordinate complement clause can be shown not to be 'semantically' subordinate; instead the complement taking phrase has been weakened. Diessel/Tomasello's (2001) study of 'finite complement clauses' also reveals that the 'CTV-clause' ('Complement Taking Verb-Clause') in spoken English mainly functions as a discourse pragmatic phrase, whereas the main proposition is expressed by the 'COMP-clause':

> "[....] rather than being viewed as a conceptual element of the CTV-clause proposition (as in the assertive use), the COMP-clause expresses the main proposition, which the hearer interprets with the help of the CTV-clause". (Diessel/Tomasello 2001: 106)

Thus, if we take interactional uses of these 'matrix-complement'-combinations serious, we are confronted with what Aijmer (2007: 38) calls a "usage-based attack on the classical subordination analysis", as the analyses reverse "the hierarchical relationship between the clause containing that and the clause containing the content (the 'complement clause')" (Aijmer 2007: 38).

2.3. 'N-*be*'-utterances followed by a complex stretch of discourse

Even though the "die Sache/das Ding ist"-syntagma can be left out without the utterance becoming ungrammatical, it still has important interactional functions: On the one hand, it anticipates the following syntagma and guides the recipients' attention to the focal proposition, on the other hand it ensures the speaker the opportunity to finish her/his turn. This floor-holding function is especially important in the case of longer discourse segments. Thus, it is not

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15 Cf. also Laury & Okamoto (presentation at the 10th International Pragmatics Conference in Göteburg, 2007) on complement-taking predicates in Japanese and English. Cf. Keevallik (presentation at the 10th International Pragmatics Conference in Göteburg, 2007) on interrogative complements in Estonian interaction.

surprising that "die Sache ist"-constructions are often used to introduce complex arguments and information which extend several turn construction units (TCUs).

The following segment is taken from an interaction between Olga, a patient who suffers from panic attacks and her friend Eva:

```
PANIKATTACKEN: OLGA-EVA
21 Olga:   es hat mich SEHR v- viel überWINdung ge[kOstet;]
22 Eva:                                          [un-    ]
23 Eva:    hm?
24 Olga:   d- das ding is hAlt; (-)
25         <<all> is nunma so;>
26 Eva:    hm
27 Olga:   wenn=du dat EIN.MA hAst,
28         dat LÄSST dich NICH (meh)los.
29         ECHT. NICH.

PANIC ATTACKS: OLGA-EVA
21 Olga:   I really had to force [myself;]
22 Eva:                          [un-    ]
23 Eva:    hm?
24 Olga:   th- the thing is; (-)
25         <<all> it's like that;>
26 Eva:    hm
27 Olga:   once you have had it,
28         you can't escape it.
29         REALLY. NO.
```

Olga describes the difficulties she had driving her car after suffering from a panic attack. Following Eva's encouraging minimal response (l. 23), Olga starts with a general statement about panic attacks (l. 24ff.). "d- das ding is hAlt; (-)" (*'th- the thing is; (-)'*) opens a projection span, which is delayed for the sake of a parenthetical insertion "<<all> is nunma so;>" (*'<<all> it's like that;>* ') (l. 25) as well as Eva's minimal response token (l. 26).

Part A	Part B
N+copula-clause	complex segment
d- das ding is hAlt; (-)	+PARENTHESIS+ wenn=du dat EIN.MA hAst, dat LÄSST dich NICH (meh)los.
th- the thing is; (-)	*+ parenthesis+* *once you have had it,* *you can't escape it.*

The insertion of a parenthesis as well as a minimal response token indicate that opened projections can be deferred and still remain active across the inserted material (Auer 2005).

Thus, in using a "die Sache ist"-construction, speakers can exploit its delaying or stretching function of the main point; the "die Sache ist"-construction can provide cognitive and

interactional space for thinking through claims. "This 'thinking through' is, like all discourse, as much interactional as cognitive in nature, since it aims to extend the speaker's turn and stave off interruption and possible derailment while the argument is being worked out." (Hopper/Thompson 2007: 8)

Furthermore, the construction allows speakers to keep their turn even in cases in which co-participants provide insertions – as in PANIC ATTACKS. In line 27, Olga finally finishes her construction by adding a conditional clause ("wenn=du dat EIN.MA hAst, dat LÄSST dich NICH (mehr)los."; 'once you have had it, you can't escape it.').[16]

The fact that recipients wait with their turn taking until the gestalt has been closed, indicates that participants orient to this constructional pattern.

In the next example, the 'matrix clause' is followed by a complex chunk of discourse, a narrative sequence.

Hilde and Hanna are complaining about the 'impertinence of some doctors'. Hanna states that in cases in which doctors know their patients personally, they appear to be much more committed:

```
KRANKENHAUS-ERFAHRUNG
32   Hanna:   das kann natürlich sein,
33            dass er sich einfach MEHR engagiert,
34            wenn er DICH kennt. mhm.
35   Hilde:   DU (.) die sache is die, (-)
36            eines morgens kam der oberarzt mit ner schwester rein,
37            un- die sAgten mir,
38            SO: (.) SIE kommen jetzt gleich
                  innen OP zur ausschAbung.
39            ich (.) so (.)
40            WIE?
41            gestern abend sagte man mir noch,
42            alles sei in Ordnung.
43            <<all> dann stellte sich RAUS,>
44            <<f> die hatten MICH verWECHS[ELT.]>
45   Hanna:                                 [BOH]
46   Hanna:   un[GLAUBlich.]
47   Hilde:     [echt.] ich wa: so FETTICH.

EXPERIENCE IN THE HOSPITAL
32   Hanna:   it might be of course,
33            that he is more thorough committed,
34            if he knows YOU personally. mhm.
35   Hilde:   YOU (.) the thing is such, (-)
36            one morning the assistant medical director came in
                  with a nurse,
37            an- they told me,
38            SO: (.) YOU will have to go into the operating room soon
                  to have a D&C.
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16 In "die Sache/das Ding ist"-constructions we frequently find modal particles and adverbs (such as "halt", "nämlich", "natürlich", "aber" etc.), which are used to contextualize speakers' argumentative direction (such as disagreement) or to back the validity of following argument. In PANIC ATTACKS: OLGA-EVA the modal particle "halt" ("d- das ding is hAlt;") enforces the validity of the following sententious maxim.

```
39              I (.) like (.)
40              WHAT?
41              last night they told me,
42              everything was okay.
43              <<all> then it turned OUT,>
44              <<f> they had misTAKEN[ME for someone else.]>
45   Hanna:                      [BOH]
46   Hanna:   un[BELIEVable.]
47   Hilde:     [really.] I was: so UPSET.
```

After Hanna mentioned that it is advantageous to know one's doctor personally, Hilde starts her turn with an emphatically marked vocative: "DU" ('you'). She then introduces a "die sache is die,"-syntagma, which includes the catadeictic element "die" (*'the, such'*), line 35. In my data, catadeictic elements are often used in cases in which the "die Sache ist"-syntagma introduces complex stretches of discourse.[17] In order to back her assessment concerning the impertinence of some doctors, Hilde reconstructs her past experience – in the form of an exemplary complaint-story (Günthner 2000). Again, the "die Sache ist"-phrase (l. 35) functions not only to open up a projection span indicating 'more to come'; but it also works as a floor-holding device in order to construct a longer, sequentially complex turn, a "big package" (Sacks 1964-68/1992). Thus, long projections are not restricted to written texts, but also in spoken interactions participants are able to deal with long stretching complex sequences.

In general there is a tendency in spoken interactions to omit the markers of subordination (the subjunction "dass" as well as final positioning of the finite verb) in cases in which complex segments form the second part of the "die Sache ist"-construction. In such cases, the grammatical tying between the two parts is reduced.

3. Conclusions

As the analysis of "die Sache/das Ding ist"-patterns shows, the postulated "N *be that*"-schema with its syntactical format [matrix clause + complement clause] is insufficient when it comes to actual usage in spoken interaction. Speakers make use of "die Sache/das Ding ist"-constructions in order to project an upcoming syntagma as the focal point.[18] However, the gestalt of the syntagma to come (part B) is underdetermined; i.e. no precise predictions can be made about the specific kind of syntactic structure that is going to emerge. Instead of reducing part B to

(i) an integrated subordinate clause with verb final positioning – introduced by the complementizer "dass",

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[17] However, even in cases, in which the "die Sache ist"-phrase is followed by a complex stretch of discourse, the catadeictic element "die" is not necessary (cf. the transcript PANIC ATTACKS: OLGA-EVA). The projective force of part A ("die Sache ist") is strong enough to cover a complex discourse segment.

[18] Cf. Schmid (2001) and Aijmer (2007) for similar observations concerning "the fact/truth/problem/trouble is that"-formulas.

it can display other syntactic forms:

(ii) it can be realized as a syntactically non-integrated main clause (verb second positioning),

or (iii) it can consist of a complex construction or even a longer stretch of discourse.

In case of (i), part B is formally (by means of the complementizer "dass" and verb final positioning) – but no longer conceptually – subordinate to the matrix clause. Even though the presence of "dass" in combination with final positioning of the finite verb indicates syntactic subordination, the main message and central activity is no longer placed in the 'matrix clause' but in the 'subordinate' part. Thus, the grammatical coding does not reflect the information structure. In cases (ii) and (iii), however, the matrix clause ("die Sache/das Ding ist") moves into the pre-front field and comes close to a metapragmatic framing device. At the same time, the 'complement clause' looses its dependent features, such as the subjunction "dass" and the verb-final positioning.

Thus, the construction at hand lines up with certain tendencies in grammaticalization: In reanalysing a matrix clause as a discourse pragmatic phrase (i.e. a 'projector phrase'), it is degraded in its pragmatic weight, its interactive function, as well as its syntactic features in favour of the following syntagma (i.e. the former 'complement clause') (Auer 1998; Günthner/Imo 2004; Auer/Günthner 2005). This increase in relevance on the side of the 'complement clause' confligates with syntactic subordination, and thus, leads to an elimination of subordination markers (i.e. loss of the complementizer, loss of verb final positioning, as well as loss of prosodic dependence). Instead of a syntactic and conceptual dependence of the 'complement clause' on the 'matrix clause', we are now faced with the opposite case: The seeming 'matrix clause' is syntactically, semantically, as well as pragmatically and interactionally dependent on the following syntagma, which holds the focal information.[19] In line with this reanalysis of matrix clauses as projector phrases, these phrases become routinized and formulaic[20] and are highly skewed toward certain communicative functions: They project and defer an upcoming segment of discourse, focussing the recipients' attention to the following segment of discourse. It is not surprising, though, that speakers use these constructions in face-threatening (disagreements, providing sensitive information…) as well as in argumentative contexts: They delay the main point, so as to provide interactional space to contextualize a dispreferred utterance (Pomerantz 1979) and to work out how to present their position in as non-assailable and persuasive a way as possible.

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[19] Cf. also Verhagen (2001) and Aijmer (2007).

[20] Part of the routinization of "die Sache ist/das Ding ist"-patterns is that the NP in my data is always in the singular, and the copula is mainly restricted to "ist" (present tense). There is only one example with a subjunctive use of the copula "wäre". Cf. Aijmer (2007) for similar observations concerning the English "the fact is that"-constructions.

Furthermore, uses of 'N-be-that'-constructions in everyday spoken interactions reveal that constructions cannot be conceived as fixed entities, but as emergent products of interactional practices. They turn out to be less schematic and more flexible in actual spoken usage than the way they are portrayed in reference grammars and linguistic studies based on written sentences. In accordance with Hopper/Thompson (2007: 19), my data support the view that biclausal sentences of literate language represent the "normativized" version of the patterns of spoken language: "The constructions of written language manifest greater compactness and a higher degree of syntactic integration than the more fragmentary and paratactic arrangement of spoken utterances. The counterpart in spoken conversation of the strict syntactic biclausality that we take as the norm in grammatical studies is a more or less formulaic segment of speech that serves to project an upcoming region of discourse combined with a subsequent stretch of text of indeterminate length that responds to the projection."

What does this study teach us about subordination-coordination?
Traditionally, a matrix clause and its complement clause are seen as a biclausal structure, with the complement clause being subordinate to the matrix clause. However, in studying everyday conversation, it becomes evident that formats involving grammatical phrases such as those introduced here cannot be satisfactorily explained on the assumption of a biclausal syntactic construction. The "die Sache ist"-construction turns out to be much more than a mere matrix-complement-clause when it comes to the ways in which this construction is employed in everyday German interaction. The 'main clause' does not hold main information, instead it is transformed into a framing device projecting the main information which is produced in the 'subordinate clause'.

This study, once again, problematizes the prevailing assumptions of syntactic subordination as well as dichotomy between subordination and coordination (Haiman & Thompson 1984; Matthiessen/Thompson 1988; Günthner 1996, 1999; Auer 1997). The re-interpretation of a matrix clause as a pragmatic phrase, however, is not a singular case, but lines up with observations from other interactional studies of so called 'matrix-' and 'complement'-clauses: Various patterns that have been treated as consisting of a main and a subordinate clause can also be seen as constructions consisting of a pragmatic phrase (i.e. a discourse marker, a 'Complement Taking Verb-Clause', a projector phrase, etc.) and a syntactically rather independent segment of discourse to follow (Thompson/Mulac 1991; Rehbein 2003; Günthner/Imo 2004; Auer/Günthner 2005; Hopper/Thompson 2007; Imo 2006a,b; Aijmer 2007).

Instead of a biclausal sentence pattern consisting of a matrix- and complement-clause we are confronted with a bipartite construction, whereby the first part functions as a projector-phrase and the second part can take various patterns ranging from syntactic subordination to longer stretch of discourse.

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